

geology. But, lo and behold, that was the site that was chosen.

You will hear again and again from colleagues on the other side that this siting decision is a purely local matter. It is not. The most obvious reason is that it is up to the Congress to ratify this Compact between Texas, Maine, and Vermont. Without the Compact, it is unlikely there will be a dump. Without the upfront payments from the other States, where is the construction money going to come from? And by the Texas Waste Authority's own projections, the dump will not be economically viable if Maine and Vermont do not sign up in advance. Texas does not generate enough waste.

There are other reasons why this debate rises above the purely local level. If the Texas Compact passes the Senate, it is entirely possible that Sierra Blanca will become the low-level radioactive waste dump for the entire country. Backers of the Compact say that that is not their plan. They say no other States besides Maine and Vermont will ship waste to Texas. If that is the case, then I propose a solution. And I am hoping there will be support for this.

Let the Senate agree to an amendment I want to offer, which is just like the Doggett amendment that passed the House, limiting the Compact to Maine and Vermont. Now, it seems to me, if the argument is being made that the only waste that is going to come to Texas is from Maine and Vermont, then let us just pass that amendment. And let us be clear about it. Then the debate is over.

But we cannot shirk our responsibilities by pretending that this is nothing more than a State or local affair. The Sierra Blanca dump is unlikely to be built if the Senate rejects this Compact. But if the Senate approves this Compact, Sierra Blanca may become the Nation's premier dump site for low-level radioactive waste. It is that simple.

The Senate vote will largely determine whether or not a grave injustice is inflicted on a community that deserves no such thing. It would be easy for all of us to turn our backs and just ignore this issue. But there is no way for the Senate to wash its hands of this business. For good or ill, we bear moral responsibility for what happens to the people of Sierra Blanca. This is a wrong that richly deserves to be righted. And we have the power to do just that.

Mr. President, again, let me just make it clear that this is an issue of environmental justice. It is a David versus Goliath fight. There are lots of big guns in here that are pushing for this waste dump site. But we have one thing on our side. My colleagues have said, "Rest assured, this will only be waste from Maine and Vermont that will go to Texas." I say, if that is the case, please support the Doggett amendment. It has already passed the House of Representatives. Then we can go forward.

I will have one other amendment which just says that if we approve the Compact, but it turns out that it can be proven that this has a discriminatory effect on a community of color or low-income people, then they have the right to go to court. If those amendments pass, then this Compact will pass the floor of the Senate.

Mr. President, I do believe that the people of Sierra Blanca and hundreds of minority communities just like them from around the country have not been given their due. But we can make the system work. I am firmly convinced of that. Sometimes justice needs a second chance. Sometimes it needs a little push. And over the next few weeks, I think we are going to give justice a second chance on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I am hoping that these amendments will be accepted. I believe that would be the right thing to do. I think there should be strong bipartisan support for that. If that does not happen, then I am prepared to use all of the hours on the floor of the U.S. Senate that I have at my disposal as a Senator—and I will use those many hours—to talk about environmental justice in this country.

Over and over and over again, we essentially take this waste and we dump it, right on the heads of low-income people. Over and over and over again, we look to the communities of color, we look to poor communities, we look to the communities that are not the heavy hitters, that are not well connected, and this is where we put it.

This happens all across the country. I can bring to the floor of the Senate study after study after study that show that. I can marshal the evidence. I am hoping that we will agree that this Compact will be something we can pass, if we make it clear that the waste can only come from Maine and Vermont. If not, I think for the first time on the floor of the U.S. Senate we will have a really—maybe not the first time—but we will certainly have a very thorough and important debate, I think, about environmental justice.

TRIBUTE TO FRANK STRUKEL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Finally, Mr. President—I know other colleagues are on the floor. I just looked back and I saw Senator KENNEDY from Massachusetts, who I think has been the best labor Senator maybe in the history of the country. Maybe along with Senator Metzenbaum.

It was Saturday night, and I promised myself I would do this. I want to make this a part of the official RECORD of the U.S. Senate. Saturday night, on the Iron Range in Eveleth, MN, there was at a gathering to honor a man named Frank Strukel who has been one great labor organizer. He is struggling with ALS, which is commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease. His friends from all over the State of Minnesota came to honor him. He should be honored.

I see my colleagues—Senator ASHCROFT, who happens to be a good

friend, even though we do not always agree on issues. But one thing we do agree on is we respect people who work hard on things that they believe in. We respect people who live by the words they speak. Frank Strukel was that way. Frank Strukel is that way.

I am hoping and praying he will somehow figure out a way to defeat this disease. He said that night he is going to be with us for a long time. I hope and pray that is the case. I promised him that I would say on the floor of the Senate that Frank Strukel has been one heck of a hell-raising labor organizer. And he has been just that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). Who yields time?

Mr. ABRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Missouri yield time or—

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. HARKIN. Sorry? What was that request?

Mr. ABRAHAM. To speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. Oh.

CONCERNING RECENT NATURALIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I come to the floor today in my capacity as chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee to call my colleagues' attention to some recent developments in the naturalization area, some of which are extremely serious.

As many of you may have read in today's Washington Post or the Los Angeles Times, Coopers & Lybrand today unveiled its recommendations to the Justice Department for reengineering the naturalization process. After a year-long review, Coopers & Lybrand has developed what it is calling a "blueprint for a new naturalization process," which would involve a complete overhaul of that process. Given what we have seen in the past in this area—particularly in the area of criminal background checks—a reworking of the entire process is certainly needed and Congress should be involved in any redesign. Coopers & Lybrand has prepared us with what is essentially a solid outline for a streamlined, more automated and more centralized naturalization system. Of course, many details remain to be worked out, but I am